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A
SERMON,
OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH
OF
THE RIGHT HONORABLE
The Countess Dowager of Huntingdon;
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE JUNE 17, 1791,
IN THE EIGHTY-FOURTH YEAR OF HER AGE.

PREACHED AT THE
Chapel in King-street, Birmingham,
ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 26, 1791.

BY G. WARING. K

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To the Reader.

THIS Discourse was composed with no other design, than that the providence which was the occasion of it, might be improved by the congregation to whom it was preached: Therefore the only apology that I shall make for its being published, is, that in so doing I wish to shew a free compliance to the request of those who have a right to claim my labours.

Many things might have been altered—more might have been added, respecting this noble Lady; but as the wish of the people is to have it just as it was delivered, the ideas and expressions have been attended to as much as may be expected in a sermon delivered in an extempore way. As it was not intended for public view; was only a cursory, hasty production for the pulpit, I trust this will secure the candour of the judicious into whose hands it may come.

To the Reader

I have been thinking much lately of the
many things that are going on in the world
and how they are all connected together.
I have seen the people of different
countries and different ages, and I have
seen how they are all striving to
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A SERMON.

2 SAMUEL, I. 19.

HOW ARE THE MIGHTY FALLEN!

I IMAGINE you all know the reason of my choosing this text; therefore, to say any thing on this head would be inexpedient. The words are David's; the occasion, the death of Saul and Jonathan; the general parts are two—

First, An appellation of honour—the *mighty*. By persons being mighty, we commonly understand that power and authority which is the result of wealth*, or some superior dignity of station†. In both these respects, Saul and Jonathan were mighty.

Secondly, We have the *extinction* of these mighty ones, under the word *fallen*. When David says, How are the mighty fallen! he

* Ruth ii. 1.

† Ezra iv. 20.

does not mean, fallen from some particular office, or honours in life; but fallen under the power of death.

Falling, is taken differently in the scriptures. We read of falling, in an *evil* sense; as the fall of angels, and the fall of man. Angels fell from felicity to infamy—from heaven to hell*. Adam, and all men in him, fell from perfection to corruption—from a state of happiness to a state of misery, guilt, and death†. Our death is a fall, in consequence of Adam's fall.

We read of falling, in a *good* sense; as when we are told that Moses‡, Abraham§, David, and others fell before God; that is, in reverence to worship and adore him as their Lord and Saviour.

We read of falling, in an *afflictive* sense; as where Solomon says, the just man falleth seven times, and riseth again||; he means, that he falleth into troubles often—although the believer falleth into troubles, he shall not fall under troubles; for God will raise him.

* Jude vi. † 1 Cor. xv. 22. Rom. v. 12. 14. ‡ Numb. xiv. 5. § Gen. xviii. 2. || Prov. xxiv. 16.

We read of falling, in a *religious* sense; as when nominal professors cast off their profession, and renounce the doctrine of Christ, they are said to fall from the faith *.

We read of falling, in an *irrecoverable* sense; as did Cain, Judas, and other apostates †.

We read also of falling, in an *immature* sense; the metaphor in our text is borrowed from the falling of untimely fruit from the tree, before it is ripe: in this sense, Saul fell—in his strength and vigor. But it was not so with the deceased; she fell, and came to the grave (as Job speaks of death) at a full age, like a shock of corn coming in at its season ‡. In discoursing on this passage, I shall,

First, Make some general remarks on the words before us.

Secondly, Shew what it is that denominates a person mighty, in a religious view.

Thirdly, Conclude with an inference from the subject.

And in doing this humble honour to the memory of the deceased, it is not my design to

* Gal. v. 4. † Gen. iv. 14, 15, &c. ‡ Job v. 26.

entertain you with useless encomiums on her memory—my prayer is, that I may so speak of her death, as may be to the advantage of you, the living. We are to make some general remarks on the words.

First, Observe, that it is *lawful* to *celebrate* the *memory* of the *dead* *. I mention this, because some will tell us, that funeral orations are not productive of good, but harm; that praying to saints had its origin from the injudicious honours, which in early ages were paid to the dead. We justify our conduct on this occasion from the holy example of David, who, in the text, venerates the power and might of the King and his son, though now dead. The text, and this solemn occasion, lead us to reflect on the death of three mighty ones—a King, a Prince, and a Peerefs. In Saul, we have an *awful remembrance* of *death*; though he was Israel's King, he died a wicked man, and may represent many who are disguised in Christ's livery, prove hypocrites, and perish. In Jonathan, we have an *humiliating remembrance* of *death*; though a good man, he falls in the battle with Saul—which may teach us this humb-

* Isaiah lvii. 1.

ling lesson, that the best of men are mortal. In the Countess, we have a very *encouraging remembrance of death*; from the living joys which she had in her dying hours. When the blood-vessel broke, which was the commencement of her illness, being asked by Lady Ann Erskine, her dear and constant companion, How she did? she said, "I am
 " well; all is well—well for ever. I see,
 " wherever I turn my eyes, whether I live or
 " die, nothing but victory."

Secondly, Observe, that the *death of singular characters is matter of public lamentation*. Our text is used by way of lamentation, on the death of Saul and his son. We are told, verse 11, when intelligence of Saul's death was brought to David, that he took hold of his clothes, and rent them. This was the custom in the oriental countries, as a token of sorrow and mourning. Verse 12, it is said, they mourned, wept, and fasted until even. Verse 24, all Israel are called to weep and mourn for Saul and Jonathan. Does not the death of great ones pass without public mourning? then may not we, on this occasion, take up David's mournful lamentation,
 and

and say, Alas, how are the mighty fallen! A nursing mother is fallen in Israel this day!

Thirdly, Observe, that *worldly greatness does not exempt* from the *power of death*. The text tells us, of the fall of the great, and the mighty. If greatness, goodness, or usefulness, could free from death, we should have had no need to say, Alas, our dear patroness is no more! This may be thought a needless remark, as no one pretends to say, that man's greatness frees him from the common laws of mortality: but observe, though none presume, that worldly greatness frees from death, I think all will allow, that it often makes men forget death. I remember reading of one who, on his death bed, said, "When I entered into orders, I had hopes of salvation; when I became a Cardinal, I doubted it; but, since I have been the Pope, I have wholly despaired of it." A similar case to this I knew, of one who, when he had scarcely bread to eat, would speak of nothing but Christ; when he became more comfortable in the world, would say but very little of Christ; when he became independent, cast off all his profession of Christ; chose the play-house,

house, before God's house;—but mark the awful end! though his greatness caused him to forget death, it did not free him from death; for in the midst of all his affluence, he was laid upon a sick bed, and in a few days died in the horrors of dreadful despair. Remember, ye great ones, ye rich and mighty, ones, that in the midst of a splendid life you are upon the brink of death, the verge of the grave, and the precipice of an eternal gulf!

Fourthly, Observe, that *great persons are often exposed to great dangers*. David crowds much meaning into this little word, *how*; *how* are the mighty fallen! As if he had said, How great and awful have those dangers been, to which those mighty ones have been exposed! but now dangers have proved fatal. Such were the dangers to which the deceased was exposed by her religion, that at Ashby de la Zouch, her life was in eminent danger. A diabolical being, who owed even the means of his subsistence to her bounty, headed a party, who drank damnation to her over her garden wall, and acted somewhat like those spoken of Acts xxiii. 12. who swore, that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. Although those men wished destruc-

tion on themselves, if they did not lay in ambush till they had taken away her life, yet God, who designed her for great usefulness, delivered her, by smiting the conscience of one, who was privy to their intentions; who informed her how they lay in wait for her life. Nor was she in less danger from a certain character; who was filled with such enmity against her, because of religion, as even to go to three different magistrates, to give an oath, that she was guilty of treasonable acts*: but the magistrates, from a full knowledge of her loyalty, and truly noble character, and also the infamy of this person, would not receive the oath. Out of these and other dangers the Lord delivered her, and compassed her by his favour as with a shield. Remember, brethren, those who stand in high places stand in dangerous places. We often think of the danger to which we are exposed through poverty, when we forget that riches would expose us to more.

Fifthly, Observe, that *no man knows* either *when* or *by what means* he *must leave* the world. Whether by a natural or a violent death; whether by a sudden or a lingering death;

* This was in the year 1745.

whether

whether in the bloom of youth, or in old age. This occasion leads us to the death of a *young* Jonathan, a *middle-aged* Saul, and an *aged* Countess. Beloved, I do not mention these things to amuse you; but, to put you in remembrance of the uncertainty of life. Are not Solomon's words seasonable? "Boast not thyself of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth*." It is probable, when Saul came to Gilboa, that he little thought the next day's travel would bring his final overthrow:—and, sinner! thou little thinkest, that the womb of this night; yea, this hour, may bring forth eternal death to thy soul. An acquaintance of mine, some time ago, happened to travel a little one day with an horrid swearer, whom he reprov'd, and advis'd to think of the welfare of his soul: but replied he, "It will be time enough for me to think of religion when I am older." My friend remarked unto him, that life was very uncertain, and that he might not be spared. "Well, well," said he, "you leave that; if I have only time when I come to die, to pray God to be merciful unto me, I do not doubt but that I shall die as happy as any of you,

* Prov. xxvii. 1.

“ who make so much to do about religion.” But mark the awful issue!—They did not go much further together, before the swearer’s horse fell, and threw him with such violence upon his head, that his neck was broken; so that he had not time given him even to say, God be merciful. May the Lord write these things upon all your hearts, and bring you savingly to Jesus Christ to-day, for to-morrow your soul may be in eternity. I shall,

Secondly, Shew what it is that denominates a person mighty, in a religious view.

First, Persons are mighty, in a religious sense, who have *clear* and *extensive discoveries* in the *mysteries* of *divine revelation*. This see Acts xviii. 24. “ A certain Jew, named Apollos, came to Ephesus; a man mighty in the “ scriptures.” In this respect the words of our text will apply to the deceased; such was her great love to, and reverence for, the testimony of Christ in his word, that for some years after she was called by divine grace, she always read the bible with *prayer*, upon her *knees*. At one time, I recollect, she was enjoining prayer upon me, whenever I read the word—she told me, that she did not remember,

member, that at *any one time* since she had *known* the Lord, that she had taken the bible into her hand without having her *heart lifted up* to God, for a *blessing* upon what she *read*. Does not the holy example of this pious lady reprove many of you, who read the bible carelessly? not considering, that the holy bible will either be the word of life or death, of salvation or condemnation to you in the day of judgment. I beseech you, brethren, for the sake of your souls, pray over the bible whenever you read it! Search for Jesus in the word, for he is the sum and substance of the whole. What is the bible without Christ? Take Christ out of the bible, and there will be nothing left for poor souls; no way to God, no way to heaven to be found *.

Secondly, Persons are mighty, in a religious view, who are *powerful* and *prevalent* in *prayer*. Gen. xxxii. 28. "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a Prince thou art mighty, hast power with God, and hast prevailed." So noticed the deceased was in this respect, that I recollect she told me once, when she was first called

* John v. 39, and xiv. 6.

by divine grace, that persons of distinction, persons of the first rank in this kingdom, when inquiry was made for her, and she could not be spoke to with convenience, would in scorn and derision say, "Her Ladyship cannot be seen; she is at prayer with some of her beggars; some of her beggars are with her, and she is praying for their souls." But, brethren, however prayer may be scorned by men, it is better to be at the feet of Christ, "a poor Lazarus, begging our bread upon earth, than to be a rich Dives, begging our water in hell." Would you conquer your enemies—pray. A certain Queen said once, "That she was more afraid of the prayers of John Knox, than an army of ten thousand men." So Satan is more afraid to see a man upon his knees, praying against sin, than an army of ten thousand resolutions, made in your own strength; yea, so mighty is prayer, that it will prevail with him who is Almighty*. I do not mean a cold, dull form of prayer, such as many of you say over at a night, when you are got into bed, and are half asleep. *This* is an abomination before God†.

* Matt. xviii. 19.

† Prov. xv. 8.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Persons are mighty, in a religious view, who are *disinterestedly influenced* by the *truth*. 2 Chron. xxvii. 6. Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God. And may not we say of the deceased, that she was mighty in *disinterestedness*. She could have no worldly interest in spending all her fortune for the good of immortal souls. Had it been applause she was seeking? the many foul storms which fell upon her, on account of religion, would have deluged her profession. But how is it with you?—I fear some use religion as men do their fundials, which they never look at only when the sun shines on them. Are there not some here to-night who never look at religion, except the sun of prosperity shines upon it? A certain King said once, he would never launch further into the sea, than he was sure he could return with safety to the shore:—so many half-hearted professors make sure of this one thing, to go no further in religion, than they know they can return back with safety to their old companions. View the noble example of this blessed Lady before us; she embarked

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ed in the cause of Christ, fully, freely, and wholly—go thou, and do likewise.

Fourthly, Persons are mighty, in a religious sense, who are *singularly eminent in usefulness*. It is said, Acts vii. 22. “that Moses was a man mighty in words and deeds.” In this sense our text will apply to the deceased. History informs us of many useful men in the church, but of no woman equal to her. Where can we find one, of her family and fortune, devoting their all to God? Where can we find one of her rank, who is not seeking honours, riches, and ease? whilst she was found earnestly seeking the welfare of immortal souls.—Reflect on her noble deeds! May not the many hundreds which she expended every year, and some years thousands of pounds, for the support of the gospel in some places, and the spread of it in others, be numbered among her mighty deeds? May not the erecting and supporting the College at Trevecca, for the reception and education of young men for the ministry, be numbered among her mighty deeds? May not the amazing number of chapels which she has built,

built, be reckoned among her mighty deeds? May not the many hundreds of evangelical ministers, which she has sent into the Lord's vineyard (many of whom remain in this connexion, others are in the established church, others among the baptists and independents) be numbered among her mighty deeds? But the time would fail here to mention all the noble deeds of this incomparable woman.

Fifthly, Persons are mighty, in a religious view; who are *favoured* with the *graces* of the *Holy Spirit* in a *special manner*. Such were the high enjoyments with which the deceased was honoured, that we may say, justly, she was "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." She was mighty in *faith*, and divine *confidence*; as is evident from her dying expressions. At one time she said, "All the difficulties which
"surround me, and all the pains I am exercising
"with in this poor body, through mercy,
"affect not the settled peace and joy of my
"soul." She was mighty in *patience*. Doctor Lettson, in a letter to Lady Ann, in one part of it, says, "When I look back upon the past
"years of my attendance on the Countess,
"and connect with it the multitudes of others
"to

“ to whom my profession has introduced me,
 “ I feel consolation in acknowledging, that
 “ of all the daughters of affliction, she exhi-
 “ bited the greatest degree of christian com-
 “ posure that I ever witnessed.” She was
 mighty in *perseverance*; as a public character
 she has, for more than half a century, conti-
 nued amidst floods of errors, stedfastly con-
 tending for the doctrines of grace, which she
 first embraced. She was mighty in *humility*;
 after all her excellency, in what an humble
 style does she speak of herself, in her dying
 moments: “ I have always lived the poor un-
 “ worthy pensioner of the infinite bounty of
 “ my LORD GOD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST;
 “ and I now declare, that all my present peace,
 “ and my future hope of glory, either in
 “ whole or in part, depend wholly, fully, and
 “ finally, upon his alone merits, committing
 “ my soul into his arms unreservedly, as a
 “ subject of his sole mercy to all eternity.”
 She was mighty in *zeal*; many talk of losing
 their first love and zeal, but hers grew
 stronger: in the very last moments of her life,
 we may see a flame of holy zeal burst from
 her dying heart. The very day in which she
 died, she exerted herself in directing to send
 missionaries to the South Seas, in hopes of
 preaching

preaching Christ among that uninformed people. We now,

Thirdly, Infer from the subject,

First, That such *providences* as bereave *society* of their *patrons*, should be *seriously laid to heart*. Saul's death was a stroke upon the civil authority—this on sacred. When supporters and promoters of the gospel are taken away, that affect the public interest of religion, it should be matter of humiliation and prayer. Did David lament Saul's death?—so will we the death of our dear patroness, after a godly sort. Now may the priests, and the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, because the mighty are fallen!—Alas! Selina the mighty, for the spread of the gospel, is fallen!—Wesley, the great and renowned reformer of this age, is also gone!—Rowland, that bright star which gave so much light to the principality of Wales, is no more!—Thornton, that unequalled character for unbounded beneficence, is removed from the world!—O Lord Jesus, the residue of the Spirit is with thee!—

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'Thou hast taken away our Elijahs'; let a double portion of their spirit rest upon some Elishas', who may fill their places.

Secondly, From the subject we see, that *mortal calamities fall alike both upon saint and sinner*. Here we find a wicked King, and a pious Prince, fall together. Saul was a wicked man, had an evil spirit, consulted evil spirits, slew the priests of the Lord, and sought to take away David's life. Jonathan was a good man, David's friend, brother, and counsellor; yet the all-wise God suffers them to fall together in the battle!—Death is a common calamity, that visits alike the just and the unjust. Believers go to the grave through as great pains and anguish as others; yet there is a great difference between the death of these two characters. Death comes to the sinner as a curse, a plague, and a tormentor; as the inlet to eternal misery: but death comes to the saint as a friend, a convoy, and a passage to eternal joys.

Thirdly, From the subject we may further learn, that no *human excellency or*
might

might can prove any shelter against death.—Neither your birth nor blood, youth nor strength, policy nor prudence, privilege nor profession, can shelter you against the grave. You cannot be saved from the *stroke* of death, but you may be saved from the *sing* of death.

If I recollect right, Demosthenes was asked once, what was the first thing required in an orator? He answered, pronounciation. Being asked, what was the second? answered, pronounciation. Being asked, what was the third? he replied, pronounciation. So, if I were asked, what was the first preparation for death? I would answer, an interest in Christ. If I were asked, what was the second? I would reply, an interest in Christ. If I were asked, what was the third? I would say, an interest in Christ!—yea, had I ten thousand tongues, could speak so loud that all the world might hear, and was going to God's bar, I would say, and affirm, that Christ is the first, Christ is the last; and that an interest in Christ is the only preparation for death.

We never can meet death with comfort, except our minds are enlightened by the spirit of Christ, our hearts changed by the grace of Christ, our sin washed away by the blood of Christ, our souls justified by the merits of Christ, and our faith and hope built wholly upon the atonement of Christ.

That the deceased had no hope but in Christ, is evident from her own expressions. She said, at one time, " I see myself a poor
 " worm ; and, drawing near death, what
 " hope could I entertain if I did not know
 " the efficacy of Christ's blood, and turned
 " as a prisoner of hope to this strong-
 " hold ?" Adding, " How little could any
 " thing of mine give a moment's rest to a
 " departing soul ?—so much sin and self,
 " mixing with the best, and always so short
 " of what we owe ! I confess I have no
 " hope, but that which inspired the dy-
 " ing thief at the side of MY LORD ; and
 " I must be saved in the same way, as freely,
 " and as fully, or not at all." See here,
 pharisee, though she had many more good
 works to boast of than thou hast, yet Christ
 was

was her only hope; and he must be thine, or else thou art lost.

Fourthly, Are the mighty fallen? Learn hence, that the *mean* and *feeble* cannot *expect* to *stand*. Though the poor may seem beneath the fury of many enemies to which the mighty are exposed, yet they have no security from death. Think then of death, be conversant with death, familiarize death to your thoughts. Bless me! some of you are saying, why to keep death so much in our minds would make us quite melancholy! This shews, that you never by faith saw the glories of Christ beyond the grave. "Would a man be melancholy at the thoughts of leaving an homely cottage, to go and take possession of a kingdom?"—This the believer does when he dies. The cause of your having such gloomy thoughts of death, is, because you either do not know Christ, or else Christ is not before you.

I am much pleased with a story of three men, who met together to consider how they might make death familiar. The first
said,

said, " That I may be kept from sin in life, " and not be alarmed at death, I often " think of the agonies the damned are suffering for sin." The second said, " I " think of the bliss of heaven, and the " glorious rewards of the just." But, said the third, " I think of the bleeding, agonizing, dying Saviour; and in this death " I see death conquered—yea, his death is " the death of my fears, and the life of " my soul."

Some naturalists speak of a serpent, which, if it sees a man before he sees it, he is sure to be killed by it; but, if he sees it first, such is the power of the human eye on this species, that it cannot hurt him. Whether this is true or not, I will not say; yet it is true in the sense to which we may apply it. When death comes upon a man unseen, and unprepared, he is destroyed eternally; but, if a soul hath seen death overcome in the death of Jesus, such is the power of the eye of faith, that looks at, and hopes in the death of this crucified Conqueror, that neither devils nor death can hurt that soul.

Fifthly

Fifthly and lastly, From the subject to which we have been attending, we may see how great the *difference is between the fall of the righteous and the wicked.* Come here, ye careless sinners, and see the difference of these two characters !

A poor man died some years ago, who was visited by some christians I was then in fellowship with. One asked him, " If he had any hope ? " He replied, " My hope is the despair of the damned." The friend said, " Jesus is almighty to save." " I know," said he, " that he is almighty to save ; but he is also almighty to damn." " But," said the friend, " the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." " Oh ! " said the poor man, " Do not mention that terrible name, Christ, to me ; I have in life despised, and trampled his blood under my feet, and *that* is the thing, it is *that* blood that saves others, that binds me down in chains of damnation."— " Shall I pray with you ? " said the friend. " Oh, do not," said he, " mention prayer to me ! I am lost for ever ! I am now
" scorched

“ scorched with damning flames, and see
 “ the devils hovering about the bed, to drag
 “ my soul to hell.” In this horrid despair
 he died.

But let us view the fall of the righteous, in the death of our friend. At one time she said, and repeated it often, with great energy, “ The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Oh, Lady Ann, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh!” adding, “ The thought fills my soul with joy unspeakable.” Now, if you have not Jesus when you come to die, instead of saying, the coming of the Lord draweth nigh, you will say, misery and destruction is nigh; instead of being filled with joy unspeakable, you will be filled with unspeakable horrors. At another time she said, “ The Lord hath been present with my spirit this morning, in a remarkable manner: what he means to convey to my mind I know not; it may be my approaching departure. My soul is filled with glory—I am as in the element of heaven itself!” Now, if you have not
 Christ

Christ when you die, and if conscience be awake, you will not say; the Lord is present with me, but devils—you will not say, I am in the elements of heaven, but in the suburbs of hell. At another time she said, “I am encircled in the arms of love and mercy!” And, at another, “I long to be at home! Oh, I long to be at home!” She often used these words—“My work is done; I have nothing to do but to go to my heavenly Father.”—But, sinner! unless thou art brought to Christ, when dying thou wilt not be able to say, salvation’s work is done; but my soul is everlastingly undone.

Her last words, which she repeated often, in a feeble voice, so as just to be heard, were—“I shall go to my Father this night! I shall go to my Father this night!” adding, “Has God forgot to be gracious? or is there any end of his loving-kindness?” This is not spoken in a doubting way, for a question asked often carries in it the force of a strong
E denial;

denial; as when we say, Can such a thing be? we mean, No, it is impossible.

May you see the difference between the fall of the faint and the finner, and choose the better part, which shall never be taken from you! and may God add his blessing, for Christ's sake. Amen.

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